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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Breaking the Silence about Postpartum Depression:
Statewide Campaign Urges Women to Speak Up When They're Down**

SEATTLE – May 18, 2006 – “There is perhaps no more passionate a women’s health advocate than a woman who has experienced postpartum depression,” says Joan Sharp, Director of the Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect (WCPCAN), the agency leading the state’s new “*Speak Up When You’re Down*” postpartum depression (PPD) public awareness campaign officially launching today.

Postpartum depression is the number one complication of childbirth, affecting 10% to 20% of new mothers. In Washington State, between 8,000 and 16,000 women suffer from some form of postpartum mood disorder each year.

The campaign centers around three key messages: PPD is real, help is available and talking about how you feel is the first step. The campaign will focus on providing basic information about the signs and symptoms of postpartum mood disorders, and offer both a toll-free phone number (**1-888-404-7763**) and website (www.speakup.wa.gov) for more information.

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“PPD is a common but largely unrecognized condition. That can make it tough for women to know that they need help and how to get the help that will see them through,” says Carol A. Allen, Community Health Educator for Kids Get Care - Public Health Seattle & King County. “When they’ve come out on the other side, many take up the cause of changing that,” she adds. Allen speaks from experience. After battling and recovering from PPD, she is now an active member of the campaign’s advisory team working to create greater understanding of this often misunderstood and under diagnosed health issue.

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“Washington State’s commitment to raising awareness about PPD was born out of one family’s tragedy,” Sharp notes, referring to Thomas Soukakos, who led a grassroots effort to pass the 2005 law authorizing the campaign. Soukakos, owner of the popular Vios Café in Seattle, took up the cause after losing his wife to an extreme case of PPD in 2003. Hundreds of mostly female advocates across the state supported him.

The result was passage of a bill during the 2005 legislative session mandating a statewide awareness campaign on PPD. Washington is one of a handful of states that have taken action on the issue.

“Thankfully, most women who have PPD do not experience the extreme condition Thomas’ wife faced,” notes Sharp. “But no matter how serious a form it takes, the challenges for women and their families are significant. The information being shared through the campaign will make a positive difference for thousands of families in Washington who otherwise would have struggled in silence without the knowledge or resources that will help them deal with this very prevalent condition.”

For more information, visit www.speakup.wa.gov.

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Postpartum Depression Facts

PPD Help Line: 1-888-404-7763 (Operated by Postpartum Support International of Washington)

Web Site: www.speakup.wa.gov

Postpartum depression describes a range of physical and emotional changes that often occur for women after having a baby. PPD can appear days or even months after childbirth. New research shows men are susceptible too.

- Postpartum depression affects 10 to 20 percent of new mothers -- about 8,000 – 16,000 women a year in Washington State.
- Women are more likely to suffer from mood and anxiety disorders during pregnancy and following childbirth than at any other time in their lives.
- No one knows for sure why postpartum depression happens, but it affects women of all ages, economic status, and racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Signs and Symptoms

The warning signs are different for every woman but can include:

- Feeling restless, irritable, or exhausted.
- Feeling sad, depressed or crying a lot.
- Thoughts of hurting the baby, herself or others.
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much.
- Not being able to eat and weight loss.
- Overeating and weight gain.
- Feelings of being a bad mother.
- Trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions.
- Being overly worried about the baby.
- Not having any interest in the baby.